

The

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

May 1997

MAY HAPPENINGS

The May meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at noon on Thursday, May 22 at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

Guest speakers from the Nature Conservacy will be Ken Clough, Director of Protection and Martha Boshers, Director of Development.

Please call 467-4090 for reservations. Cost is \$6.00. Our maximum seating capacity is 60 guests, so please make your reservations early.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have great news of grand things to come: the City of Bay Saint Louis in conjunction with Hancock Bank will sponsor the construction of a life-size statue of the city's founder, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville.

The statue will be located in the park next to the Hancock Bank Beach Boulevard facility.

The dedication of the statue will be central to the celebration of the Tercentennial celebration for the city on August 25, 1999.

Mr. Leo Seal, Jr., CEO of Hancock Bank, will match the city contribution to the project, plus provide the location for the statue. Additional funds for a pedestal will be raised by our society by selling bricks with family names impressed.

This site appears to be ideal from every consideration. It is protected

(Continued on page 4)



Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville

L. Guillemin

**JEAN BAPTISTE LE MOYNE
SIEUR DE BIENVILLE
1680 - 1768**

1680 - Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, French explorer and colonial administrator, was born in Longueuil, Canada. He was the eighth of eleven sons of the wealthy Charles le Moyne of Montreal. He joined the

French Navy at age 12 and served at the Hudson Bay engagement against the British in 1696 and 1697 with his brother, Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville.

1697 - Louis XIV of France announced that he was sending an expedition to occupy the mouth of the Mississippi River. Spain, upon hearing of Louis' plans, sent its own fleet three

months in advance of Louis' ships.

1698 - Bienville under the command of his older brother, Iberville, sailed in search of the Mississippi River. They departed Brest, France on Friday, October 24, 1698 in two armed frigates, *La Badine* and *Le Marin*. He was 20, Iberville was 28 years old. Jean Baptiste served as midshipman aboard the *La Badine*. With them were 200 colonists. Unknown to the brothers at this time was a smallpox epidemic among the Biloxi Indians which nearly wiped out the tribe.

1699 - Iberville and Bienville arrived on January 26, 1699 at Pensacola Bay to find 300 Spaniards on shore erecting fortifications. Governor Arriola, claiming the area in the name of Spain, refused entry but sent out requested wood and water.

Pushing westward, they missed the deep-water entrance to Mobile Bay, landing instead on an island strewn with human bones indicating that a large battle had been fought there. Iberville called it Massacre Island (Dauphin island).

Again, they sailed westward carefully charting the depths and finally dropping anchor in the harbor of L'Ille aux Viseaux (Ship Island) on the morning of February 10th. On Friday, February 13th, they embarked in two ships' barges for shore landing somewhere near present-day Beauvoir. The party followed some Indians through the channel behind Deer Island, eventually making friends with them.

From the Indians they learned of the great river to the west. Sailing westward, the Frenchmen entered the mouth of the Mississippi River on March 2nd. About 100 miles upriver the Indians told them about Henri Tonti, the French explorer who had visited there in 1685 and left the "bark that talks" (a letter) with them.

Iberville returned to his ship while Bienville located the Houmas who took Tonti's letter from a hollow tree where they had placed it 14 years earlier for safekeeping and gave it to him.

Bienville returned to Ship Island via the mouth of the Mississippi. *En route* he visited and named Pass Manchac and Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain. Iberville selected a protected site at the landing he had named Biloxi to build a

fortification for his colonists. The log of *Le Marin* notes that "On Wednesday, the 8th (of April), we began to cut down trees with which to build the fort (Fort Maurepas), all the men worked so assiduously that at the end of the month the fort was finished".

Fort Maurepas became the first capital of that vast country reaching from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Yellowstone National Park to the Gulf of Mexico. This was the watershed of the Mississippi River that had been claimed for France and named Louisiana by La Salle in 1682.

On Sunday, May 3rd, having installed Sauvole as governor and Bienville as lieutenant governor, Iberville sailed to France to report his success to the king, arriving at Rochefort, France on July 2nd.

On August 25, the Feast Day of Saint Louis, Bienville explored a small bay which he named the Bay of Saint Louis in honor of Louis IX, King of France 1214 - 1270. Louis IX led the Crusades of 1248 and 1270, dying on his final Crusade. He was canonized in 1297.

In September, Bienville was paddling down the Mississippi when he encountered two English vessels commanded by Captain Barr who had come to claim Louisiana for England. Bienville deceived him into believing the French were established a little farther upstream. Barr, perceiving himself in a position of disadvantage, turned his ships and sailed down river leaving assurances that he would return later with reinforcements. He never did. Bienville had saved Louisiana from the English.

The point of encounter is still called English Turn. Bienville returned to the Bay of St. Louis in December and constructed a fort on the highest waterfront elevation on the Gulf of Mexico. The site is immediately north of the present-day intersection of Beach Boulevard and deMontluzin Street.

1700 - In January, Iberville had just returned from France when the little French fort called la Boulaye was built on the Mississippi about thirty miles below present day New Orleans.

In July a party of Englishmen from Carolina arrived to claim Louisiana for

England but La Boulaye was there to retain the claim of France. The first two years that Bienville spent in Louisiana were probably the only happy ones of his career because he was not yet saddled with heavy responsibilities.

1701 - On August 22nd, Governor M. Le Sauvole died and Bienville traveled from Fort la Boulaye to assume the duties of governor at Fort Maurepas, a position he held without formal recognition until he received his commission as governor in 1718.

At the end of 1701, Iberville returned to Louisiana bringing news that France and Spain had joined in war against England. His orders were to abandon the fort at Biloxi and move closer to the Spanish allies in Pensacola. Iberville sailed once more for France, never to return to the Louisiana territory.

1702 - On January 17th, erection of Fort Louis was begun at a site 27 miles above present-day Mobile, and the first family occupied the fort on March 19th.

1704 - By this time the colony comprised 187 soldiers and 27 families. Twenty or so women of dubious character were shipped to Mobile to increase the colony but the ship brought the plague with it and twenty-two of the settlers died of the disease.

1706 - Bienville's brother Chateauguay reached Louisiana with the news that Iberville had died of yellow fever at Havana, Cuba in July. A severe flood forced the removal of Fort Louis from the Mobile River to present-day Mobile. The new capital was occupied in 1712.

1712 - September 14th, Louis XIV assigned control of the commerce of Louisiana to Anthony Crozat, Marquis de Chatel. Bienville selected the site of New Orleans as the location of the Government, and the village was laid out in 1718. The seat of government was moved there in 1723.

Louis XIV replaced Bienville as governor and installed Antoine de le Mothe Cadillac in his place.

1713 - A letter written during the Crozat administration reads, "Director Duclose to Count Pontchartrain: There came over on the *Baron de la Fauche* twelve girls whom M. Clairambault had embarked at Port Louis, but so ugly and ill made that the inhabitants of this coun-

try and especially the Canadians, are not at all eager for them."

1717 - Crozat, unable to make his venture profitable, relinquished his charter to the king.

1720 - The king ordered the shipments of undesirable women to Louisiana stopped and directed a bishop to supervise the selection of women to be sent to the settlement. Accordingly, some eighty-odd girls who had been reared and educated in Catholic institutions for the poor embarked on the *La Badine* and arrived in New Biloxi in March 1721. They were referred to as the Filles de Cassette.

Also aboard the *La Badine* were about 20 young women of the undesirable sort who were also dropped off at Mobile and sent to the Chaumont grant at Pascagoula. Bienville complained of the Cassette girls received at Biloxi, saying that if they were all they should have been when selected in France, they had "deteriorated on the way".

1725 - Bienville was removed from office and recalled to France. His replacement as governor, Boucher de la Perier, lacked diplomacy in dealing with the Indians.

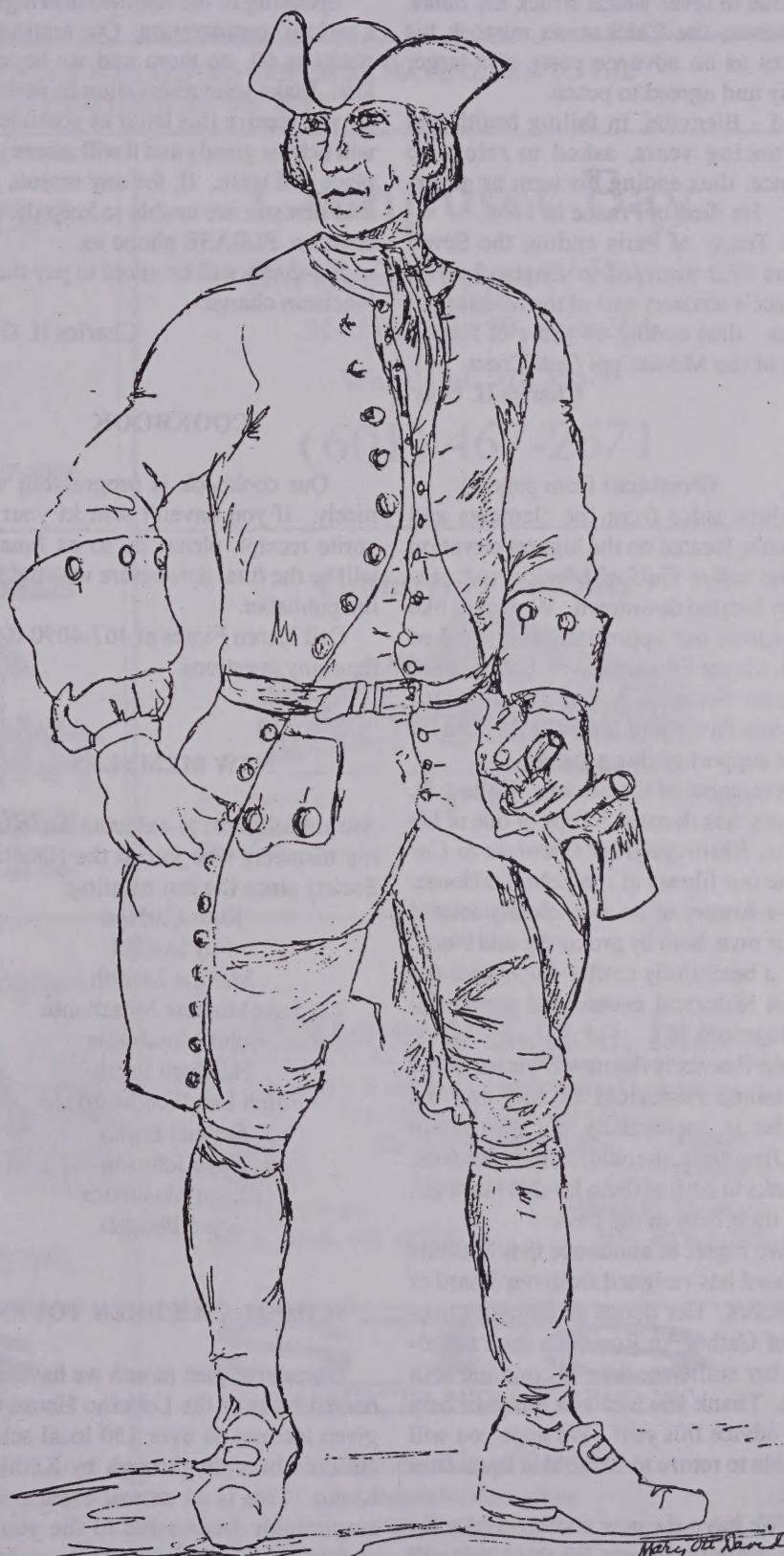
1729 - Governor Perier appointed a drunkard, Chepart, to command at Natchez. Chepart coveted a hill where the Indians had kept a fire burning to the Gods from ancient time.

After he ordered the Indians off the hill, the Indians entered the fort, fell on the whites and killed all except a tailor and a carpenter. Women and children were carried off into slavery. Chepart was clubbed to death and beheaded.

The Canadian, le Seur, leading seven hundred Choctaws, reached Natchez and rescued fifty-one women and children. Perier arrived, surrounding and capturing about 400 of the Natchez whom he sold into slavery in Cuba.

1733 - Bienville returned as governor, selected for his knowledge of the province and good relations with the Indians.

1736 - The surviving Natchez Indians had combined forces with the Chickasaws. Bienville massed an expedition at Mobile and in May he confronted their forces at the Chickasaw village on the Tombigbee. His attack on



Sketch of the proposed bronze statue of Bienville

the highly fortified village was repulsed. His second campaign against the Chickasaws was even more of a calamity due to fever which struck his ranks. However, the Chickasaws mistook his forces as an advance party of a larger army and agreed to peace.

1743 - Bienville, in failing health and advancing years, asked to return to France, thus ending his term as governor. He died in France in 1768. The Treaty of Paris ending the Seven Years War awarded to England all of France's territory east of the Mississippi River, thus ending 64 years of French rule of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Charles H. Gray

(President from page 1)
on three sides from the elements and vandals, located on the highest elevation of the entire Gulf of Mexico and centrally located downtown. We would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Leo Seal, Mayor Edward Favre, Councilmen Charles Scianna, James Thriffiley III, Thomas Farve, and James Rutherford for their support of this project.

A member of the Society, William D. Reeves, has donated a copy of one of his books, *Westwego from Cheniere to Canal* to our library at the Lobrano House. It is a history of an area closely related to our own, both by proximity and blood. It is a beautifully crafted book with detailed historical events and wonderful photographs.

Mr. Reeves is the new Director of the Louisiana Historical Society and his mother is, incidentally, our own Board of Directors member, Jean Reeves. Thanks to both of them for this latest gift and their help in the past.

We regret to announce that Melinda Richard has resigned from our Board of Directors. Her duties as founder/director of Gather Ye Rosebuds does not allow her sufficient time to continue both jobs. Thank you Melinda, for your help and advice this year. We hope you will be able to return to our fold at some later date.

We have six new six-foot tables for your dining comfort. We think this will give us a much better arrangement for our luncheon meetings.

We have 60 tumblers for ice tea, rather than the awkward stem wine glasses that we have been using.

Speaking of the luncheons brings up a serious consideration. Our seating capacity is 60, no more and we hope no less. Make your reservation as early after you receive this letter as possible. It will help us greatly and it will assure your place at a table. If, for any reason, you find that you are unable to keep the reservation, PLEASE phone us.

No-shows will be asked to pay the \$6 luncheon charge.

Charles H. Gray

COOKBOOK

Our cookbook is progressing very nicely. If you haven't sent in your favorite receipt, please do so as June 15 will be the final date before we send it to the publisher.

Call Karen Flores at 467-4090 if you have any questions.

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome the following members who joined the Historical Society since the last meeting:

Ruth Carlson
Ray Stieffel
Maxine Jaquith
Jane Mielenz Morehouse
John Morehouse
Harrison Parsh
Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr.
Samuel Bailey
Faye Johnson
Elleen Mashburn
Joyce Badgett

SCHOOL CHILDREN TOURS

During the past month we have conducted tours of the Lobrano House and given lectures to over 150 local school children brought through by Kathleen Kemp. This is an annual event and is surprisingly impressive to the youngsters. Ms. Alliston's 4th grade students at Bay Middle School each wrote a thank-you letter.

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NEW CAMERA

We have a new digital camera that uses no film and nothing has to be "developed". Once the photograph has been taken, simply plug the camera into the computer and the picture appears on the screen ready for use, either to be printed out or saved on the hard drive or a disk. The quality of these photographs is excellent. Excellent and instant are certainly two highly desirable qualities in our work.

Existing photographs can be scanned into the computer and will not have to be re-photographed as in the past.

Remaining on our "Want List" is a CD ROM maker so that all our stored information will be instantly available on ROMs for security storage, for gifts or perhaps, even for sale.

FLASH PREVIEW

An outstanding collection of prehistoric Native American artifacts, gathered by archeologist William M. Walden, has been donated to the Society by his wife and daughter. Details in a future newsletter.

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

Monday	8 a.m.
through	to
Friday	4 p.m.

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUPPORTERS

WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE GIVEN TO THE
HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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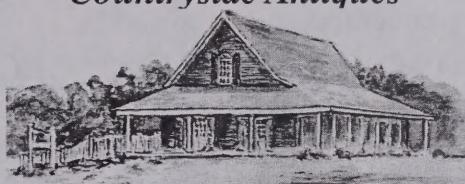
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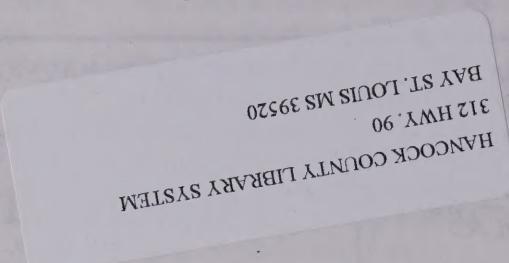
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